

# BAY TO BAY LINK FEASIBILITY STUDY

## Bay-to-Bay

Planners launch big, bold idea — but will it hold water?

**1** The plan assumes Lindbergh Fld will continue to operate at its current size and capacity, but reorganizes the airport for ground efficiency. One arc-shaped terminal would be built near Pacific Highway with a dense grove of trees forming a civic space at the entrance.

**2** The existing terminals would give way to airport services, such as car rental facilities. Harbor Drive would be less congested.

**3** Part of the Marine Corps Recruit Depot would become an aerospace museum, celebrating the nearby construction of Charles Lindbergh's plane, the Spirit of St. Louis. Historic planes would be parked on what is now the MCRD parade grounds.

**4** A swath of public parkland would line the west side of the Naval Training Center boat channel. It would form a green link and pedestrian promenade between Point Loma and Old Town. A second tree-lined promenade would lead from a straightened Midway Drive to Old Town and the Presidio.

**5** An existing group of MCRD officers' houses and gardens would become a park, preserved as a peninsula in the bay-to-bay channel. A pedestrian bridge would link the peninsula to the proposed aerospace museum across the canal.

**6** The canal would turn toward Mission Bay and feature a marina at a site now occupied by the U.S. Naval Command, Control and Ocean Surveillance Center (formerly Plant 19) parking lot on Pacific Highway. Divided by a dike, this "knuckle" would be surrounded by new parkland.

**7** The canal would trace Sports Arena Boulevard, with vehicles using a parallel tree-lined street. The Sports Arena could be demolished, to be replaced with an inlet in the shape of its oval "footprint."

**8** The canal would flow beneath Interstate 8 and turn west as a self-contained canal built within the San Diego Floodway to protect wildlife and their habitats. A north-south channel would be cut so boats could enter Mission Bay near Mission Point.

The dream of a navigable bay-to-bay link is workable, according to the team charged with studying the proposal to connect San Diego Bay and Mission Bay by a waterway. The design team's plan, shown here, would redevelop the entire Midway area, adding parks, businesses and cultural attractions between the bays.

By ANN JARMUSCH  
Staff Writer

UCSD-led design team has formalized a plan for a navigable canal connecting San Diego Bay and Mission Bay and redevelopment of the stalled Midway area in between, fulfilling a visionary challenge proposed by Mayor Susan Golding in January.

The plan could create the official framework for future projects, including infill development, redesigned traffic patterns, re-labeled greenways beside future trolley stations, and the major attraction of a boat canal linking the bays.

If approved by the City Council next year, the framework could help produce Golding's dream waterway and transform the land around it, including Lindbergh Field and its surroundings. The council is expected to be briefed in December on the plan and its proposed two-phase implementation.

"In answer to the mayor's question, the opportunity is definitely there (for a bay-to-bay link). We have provided a navigable waterway for water taxis and small sailboats," said San Diego landscape architect Martin Porrier during a presentation last weekend. "Just how navigable it is depends on how deep people reach into their pockets."

The designers and experts consulted by the team did not estimate a timetable or the cost of creating the link, which engineers have said could require decades and millions of dollars.

No financing plan exists, but team members identified revenue-producing uses for the area, including tourism and recreational facilities and redeveloped commercial and light-industrial sites.

"We haven't looked at the cost," I was asking how feasible a bay-to-bay link would be," said Golding, adding that the council could direct the city manager to investigate cost and feasibility.

The mayor said designers will continue to refine the plan, adding that some questions, such as bay-to-bay water quality, still need to be addressed.

Golding shrugged off a suggestion that the plan may be too ambitious and expensive.

"Nothing's impossible if the community wants it to happen," she said.

See Canal on Page A-26

Union-Tribune / JIM BURNETT

## The San Diego Union-Tribune

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### waterways. Will Nolen's dream become reality as a waterway or greenbelt, or is it just another fanciful idea on the county's already lengthy wish list?

**1** In 1853, the San Diego River flowed through Mission Valley and directly into San Diego Bay. That year, the first of many attempts was made to redirect the river into Mission Bay.

**2** In 1945, the San Diego River was rerouted to its current location, creating a 2-mile strip of land with a concrete flood channel.

**3** In 1994, the proposed Bay-to-Bay Link would connect San Diego Bay and Mission Bay, creating a new waterway.

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**SMOKESTACKS & GERANIUMS**

By ROGER M. SHOWLEY  
Staff Writer

A canal between San Diego Bay and Mission Bay seems so logical, so brilliant an idea, that it has been called an old idea whose time has come, and "old" it is.

According to geologists, San Diego and Mission bays were linked at the end of the Pleistocene Period, at least 600,000 years ago and long before the first humans settled in Southern California. The sea level was 100 feet higher than it is today. Point Loma was an island. Mission Valley was a navigable inlet. Coronado was under water.

When the Spaniards arrived in 1769, the two bays were separated by a wide alluvial plain and the San Diego River alternately emptied into one bay and then the other.

**INSIDE**

Minneapolis (left) is among four U.S. cities that have created canals and are better for it.

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PHOTO: MINNEAPOLIS PARK & RECREATION BOARD

See Showley on Page H-6

**SURROUNDINGS**

By ANN JARMUSCH  
Architectural Critic

A paper, the serpentine route of a proposed Bay-to-Bay Link jolts the brain into gear like a rousing game of catch-the-whip.

It's a terrific, mind-bending idea that would run a ribbon of healing waters — or calming green space, or both — through the Midway district, one of San Diego's most confusing, congested, visually polluted and relentlessly paved areas.

The sprawling, arid Midway maze appears so far removed from the sparkling spirit of the nearby ocean and bays that it might as well be in Yuma.

But if the dream of a natural bay-to-bay link were to come true, instead of fighting traffic to pick up a pizza or video, we could be lazily floating, paddling, cycling or jogging through what once was an asphalt assault with screaming signs and tacky emporiums.

Apart from welcome clean-up opportunities, a winding canal or greenbelt between Mission Bay and San Diego Bay would contribute dramatically to the year-round outdoor experiences that make this city so remarkable and alluring.

Colorful and restoring scenic beauty are key to San Diego's future as a desirable place to live, work and visit.

The curving new lifeline could be reserved for passive recreation and nature, or could be sensitively developed in places with residences, shops, open-air cafes and cultural attractions, or a carefully planned combination of these.

If a canal were built, it would not make Point Loma an island, as some critics have said, but would use new and existing bridges to connect Midway to Point Loma more sensibly.

It would add character, order and a gust of fresh air to a wasteland, but valuable area that is ripe for redevelopment with high-density housing, tourism and commerce.

**Thinking big**

If a bay-to-bay link were to dash through our city, here are some design suggestions:

- Above all, make it a natural connection. Let native plants, birds and animals flourish along with people. There's such a wealth of natural beauty in San Diego that an undigested concrete canal flanked by heavily paved trails would not ring true nor be much improvement over today's Midway area. Let San Diego's natural history sing again and make people want to return to this place.
- Hire landscape architects knowledgeable about and sensitive to San Diego's native vegetation and geography to lead the design team. That's how New Orleans was reborn.

More than Mayor Susan Golding or anyone else asked for, the plan to connect San Diego Bay and Mission Bay is a real beauty — in scope, logic and coherence.

Though in-depth feasibility and environmental studies remain to be done, the team's comprehensive concept would recharge the city's love affair with water and missions, freshwaters and indoor-outdoor recreation. The plan would create new and renewed cross-town connections inspired by stunning geography.

See Jarmusch on Page H-7

## Previous Work

The idea of improving this area of San Diego by constructing a water channel between San Diego Bay and Mission Bay is not new. In 1926 respected city planner John Nolen first proposed enhancement to San Diego by linking the San Diego Bay to Mission Bay.



In 1974, the vision was discussed within the context of the greater region by Kevin Lynch and Donald Appleyard.

In 1994 Mayor Golding sponsored a study led by UCSD's Adele Santos. The Union Tribune published a series of articles through the year following is progress and commenting on its merit. In 1998 the North Bay Revitalization Area *Environmental Impact Report* and Community Plan Amendment addressed a 200 foot wide canal corridor through the community.

Each time the idea is considered it stirs up great public controversy because of its many complications:

- cost to the residents & taxpayers
- technical feasibility of construction and maintenance of a channel
- potential impact to the habitat in the San Diego River and Mission Bay

DRAFT

One of Yogi Bera's great sayings is

"If they say it can't be done, it doesn't always work out that way."

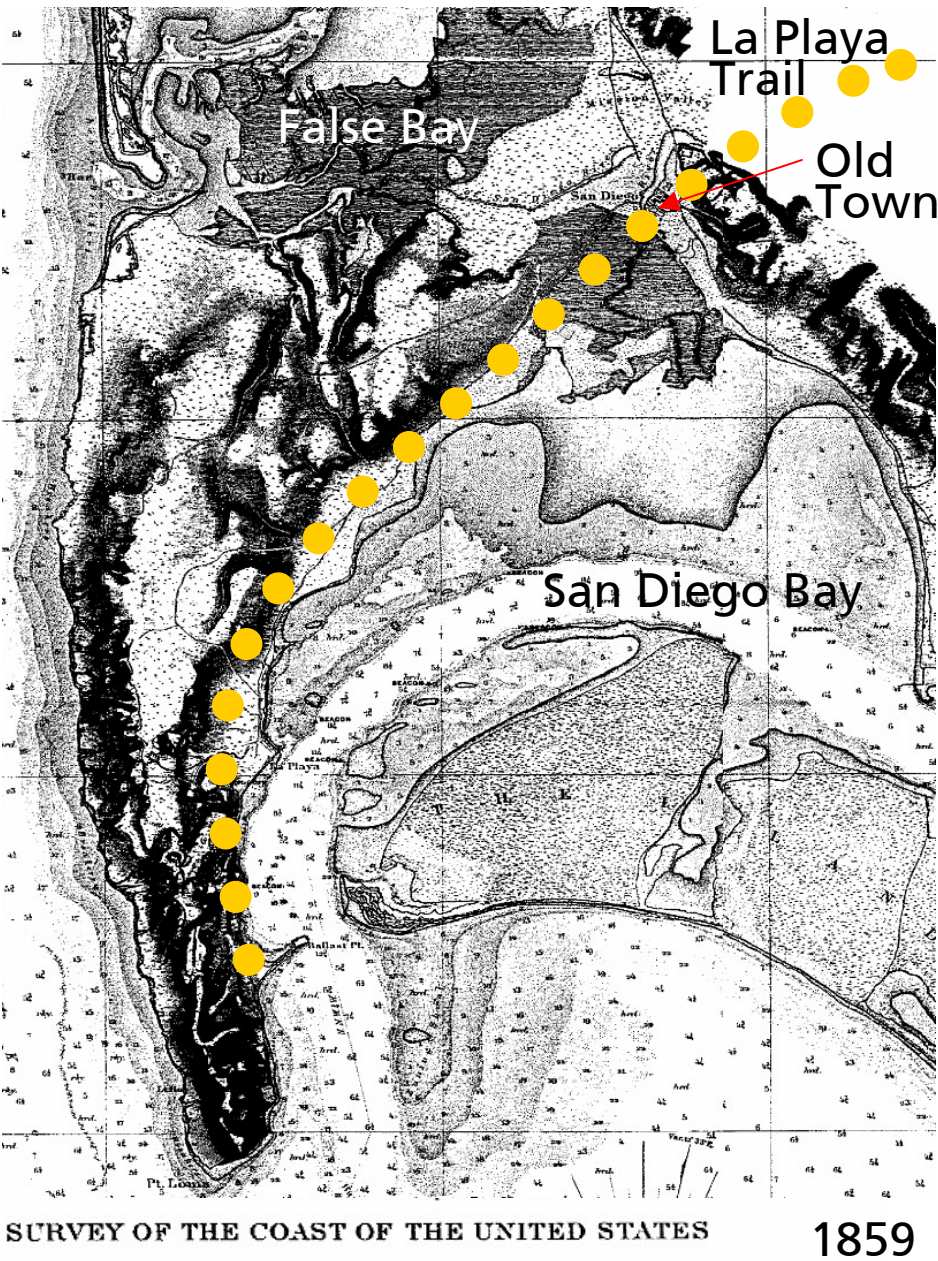
Creating good public spaces is inevitably about encountering obstacles...

Source: [http://pps.org/topics/gps/11\\_principles](http://pps.org/topics/gps/11_principles)



# BAY TO BAY LINK FEASIBILITY STUDY

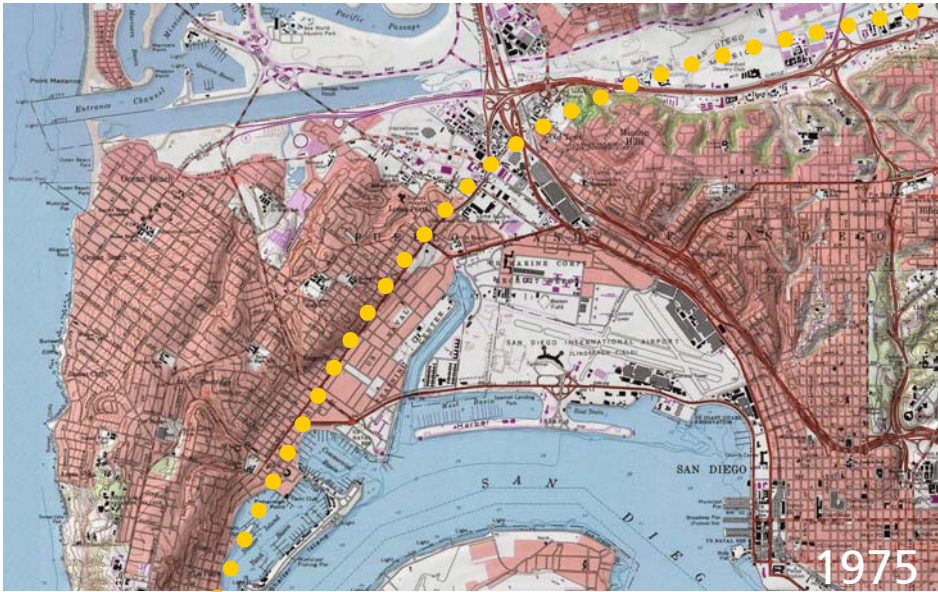
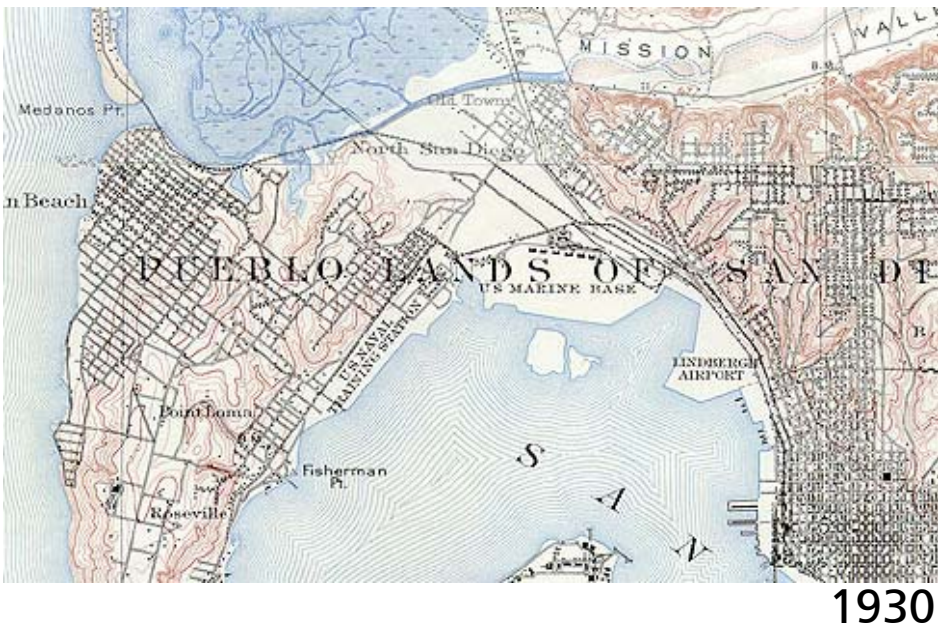
## History & Geography



Historically, the San Diego River alternatively emptied into San Diego Bay and False Bay (now Mission Bay). The Presidio was founded above the river and Old Town developed along its bank. Dikes were built in the 1880s to keep the river from flooding Old Town and flowing into San Diego Bay.

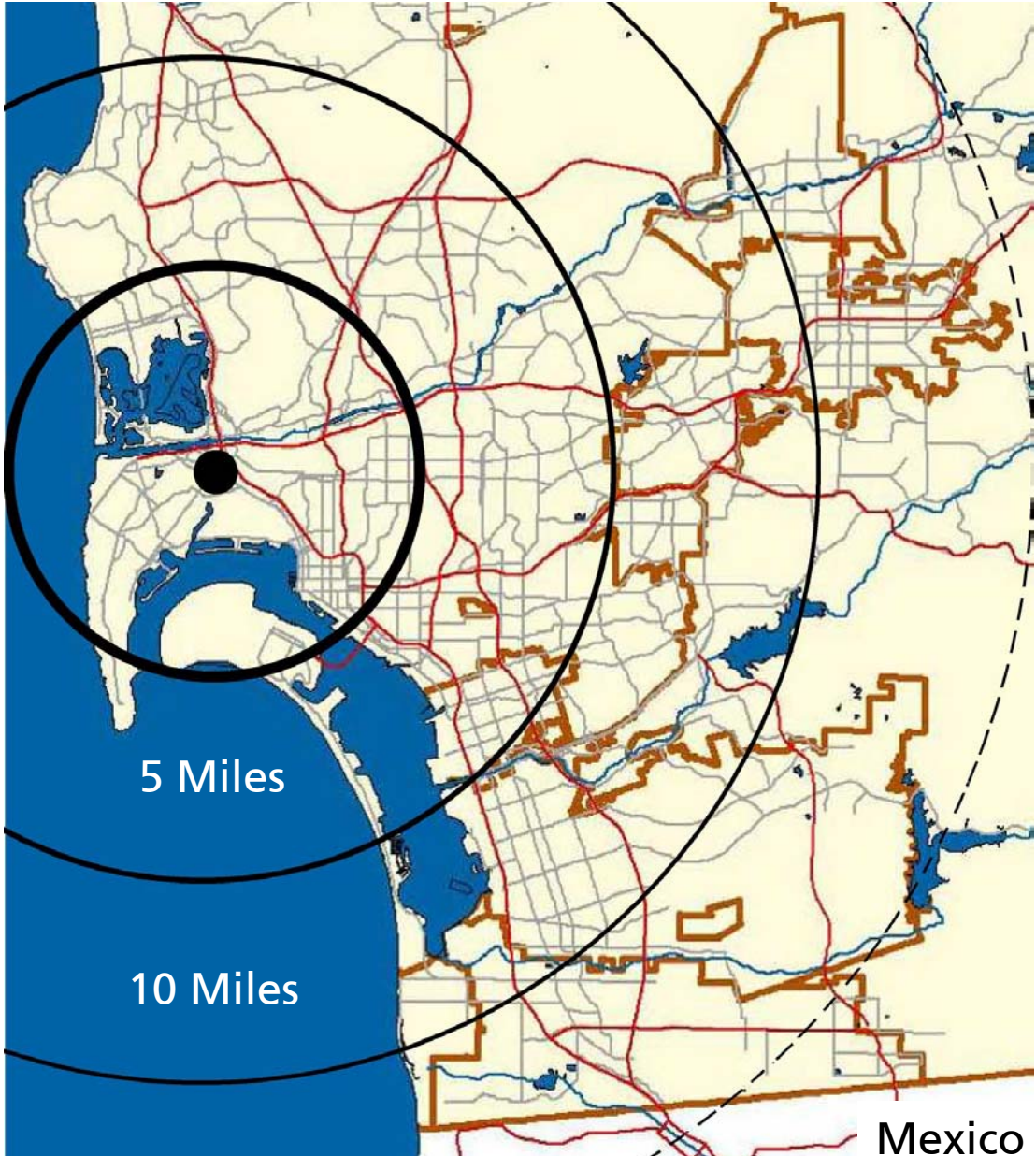
The two bays were never physically linked by the natural drainage network.

La Playa Trail linked early shipping trade at Point Loma's Ballast Point to the Old Town, the Presidio, and Mission San Diego de Alcalá.



The United States Geological Survey (USGS) map from 1930 illustrates the waterways, landforms and development patterns . In contrast to the current (1975) USGS map which indicates the amount of land taken from the wetlands of False Bay for urban development.

In 1946 Federally funded dredging of False Bay allowed for small boat navigation and a channel to direct flood water to the Pacific Ocean. By 1961 Mission Bay and the San Diego River Flood Control Channel reached their current form. Work through the 20th Century included dredging San Diego Bay, and filling for the airport, Shelter & Harbor Islands.



The use of the land has served the local and national interests including the Navy/Marine's training, research and housing to aircraft innovation and transportation service.

The Study area in the Midway Community is in a remarkable location within the region. It is between the bays, adjacent to vital residential areas, historic Old Town, international airport and within 5 miles of downtown. Additionally, railway and trolley (light rail transit) lines provide industrial and commuter access.



# BAY TO BAY LINK FEASIBILITY STUDY

*the existing view*



## Background

On April 3, 2001, by Resolution R-03315, the Redevelopment Agency of the City of San Diego authorized the issuance of a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) through the City's Engineering and Capital Projects Department to study the engineering, technical, environmental, cost, and land acquisition concerns associated with the proposed Bay to Bay Link and to include other options in addition to the proposed canal. The City hired Wallace Roberts & Todd in January 2002, to provide these professional consulting services.



*Park/open space system*



*Navigable Channel*

*These photo-composites were prepared early in the process to illustrate alternative concepts for enhancing the Midway Community.*



The recently initiated Waterfront Market held at the north end of the existing boat channel is an example of the community's enthusiasm for unique opportunities.

## Goals & Approach of the Study

The **goal** of this study is to provide specific information to the City on the feasibility of various Bay to Bay link options and to assist in decision making toward the development of an 'Urban Village Center' for this San Diego area.

The **Approach** for the Study is to:

- A. Identify Feasibility Criteria
- B. Test and Refine Draft Study Alternatives
- C. Develop a Feasible (Preferred) Alternative

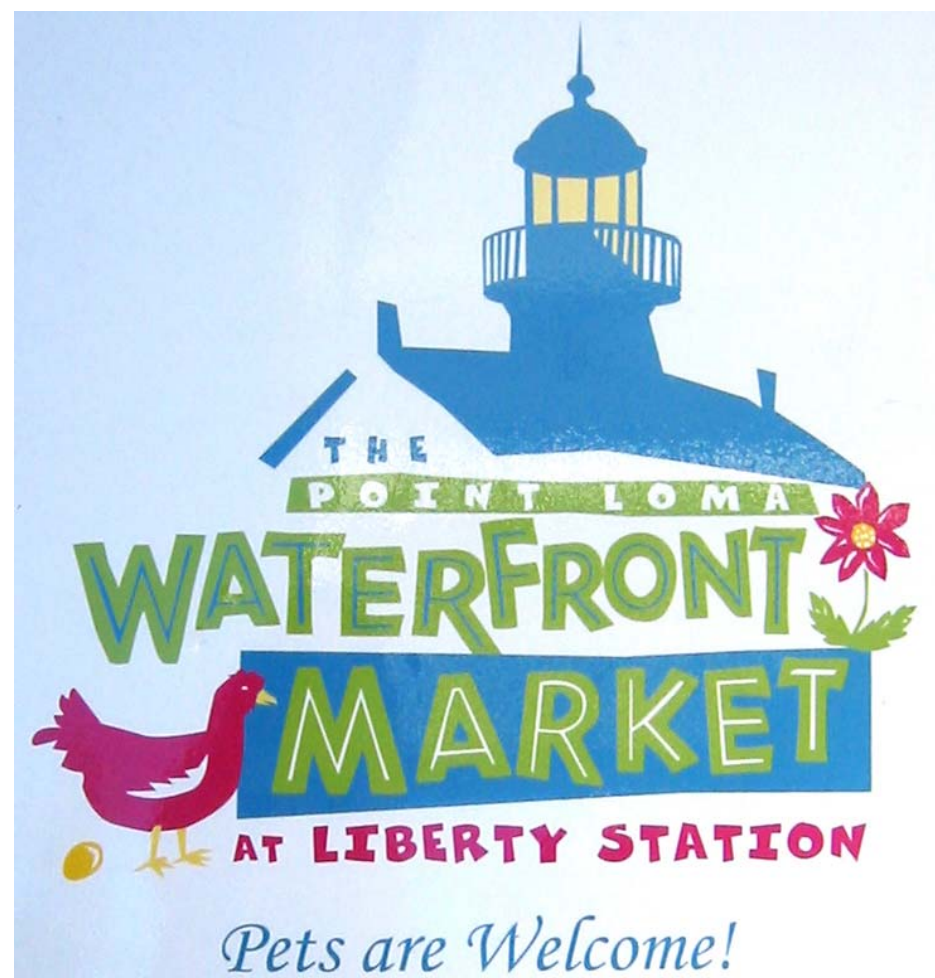
This process is built on the assembly and analysis of existing data provided to the consultant team; development of an understanding of community concerns; and the visionary leadership of the City. This effort is focused on public facilities.

**Study Alternatives** represent three categories along a continuum of investment from the minimum improvements for the network of public open space and transportation to the most elaborate improvements which involves a inland waterway lining the two Bays.

- Park Link System
- Non-Tidal Channel
- Navigable Channel/open space system as envisioned by the 1995 Study Report

The Study was conducted to address the following issues:

- Air Quality
- Biological
- Cultural Resources
- Dry Utilities
- Economics
- Geotechnical Engineering
- Hazardous Materials
- Waterfront Engineering
- Land Use and Urban design
- Noise
- Storm/Sanitary Sewer
- Transportation
- Visual Quality
- Water Quality





# BAY TO BAY LINK FEASIBILITY STUDY

		2002						2003			
		Mar.	Apr.	May	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Sept.	Oct.
<b>A. Identify Criteria</b>											
1 Initiation Meeting											
2 Stakeholder Interviews											
3 Issues and Feasibility Criteria											
4 Public Information Meeting											
<b>B. Test &amp; Refinement of Alternatives</b>											
1 Refine to Achieve the Criteria											
2 Feasibility Evaluation											
3 Public Information Meeting											
<b>C. Finalize the Preferred Alternative</b>											
1 Illustrative Plan											
2 Descriptive Report											

## Community Participation

The Study included meeting with representatives from each of the following permittees to share the goals and schedule of the Study and obtain any relevant data and recommendations.

- Army Corps of Engineers
- California Coastal Commission
- California Regional Water Quality Control Board
- City of San Diego
- City of San Diego Center City Development Corporation (CCDC)
- City of San Diego Underground Storage Tank Program
- City of San Diego Fire Department
- City of San Diego Transportation Planning
- City of San Diego, Naval Training Center (NTC)
- County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health
- Housing Authority
- Marine Corps Training Depot (MCRD)
- Metropolitan Transportation Development Board
- Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR),
- Public Utilities
- San Diego Port District
- San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board
- San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Post Office

See the appendix for contacts and summary of their comments.



Numerous relevant documents were reviewed to build the team’s understanding of the issues. See the appendix for the bibliography.

The consultant team leader met with the public during the Study process to share information gathered, understand their vision and concerns and build upon their knowledge. Two of the Three Bay to Bay Study Public Meetings have been conducted. Members of the numerous planning groups and special interest groups participated.

See the appendix for the agendas and summary of the attendants comments from the first two public meetings.



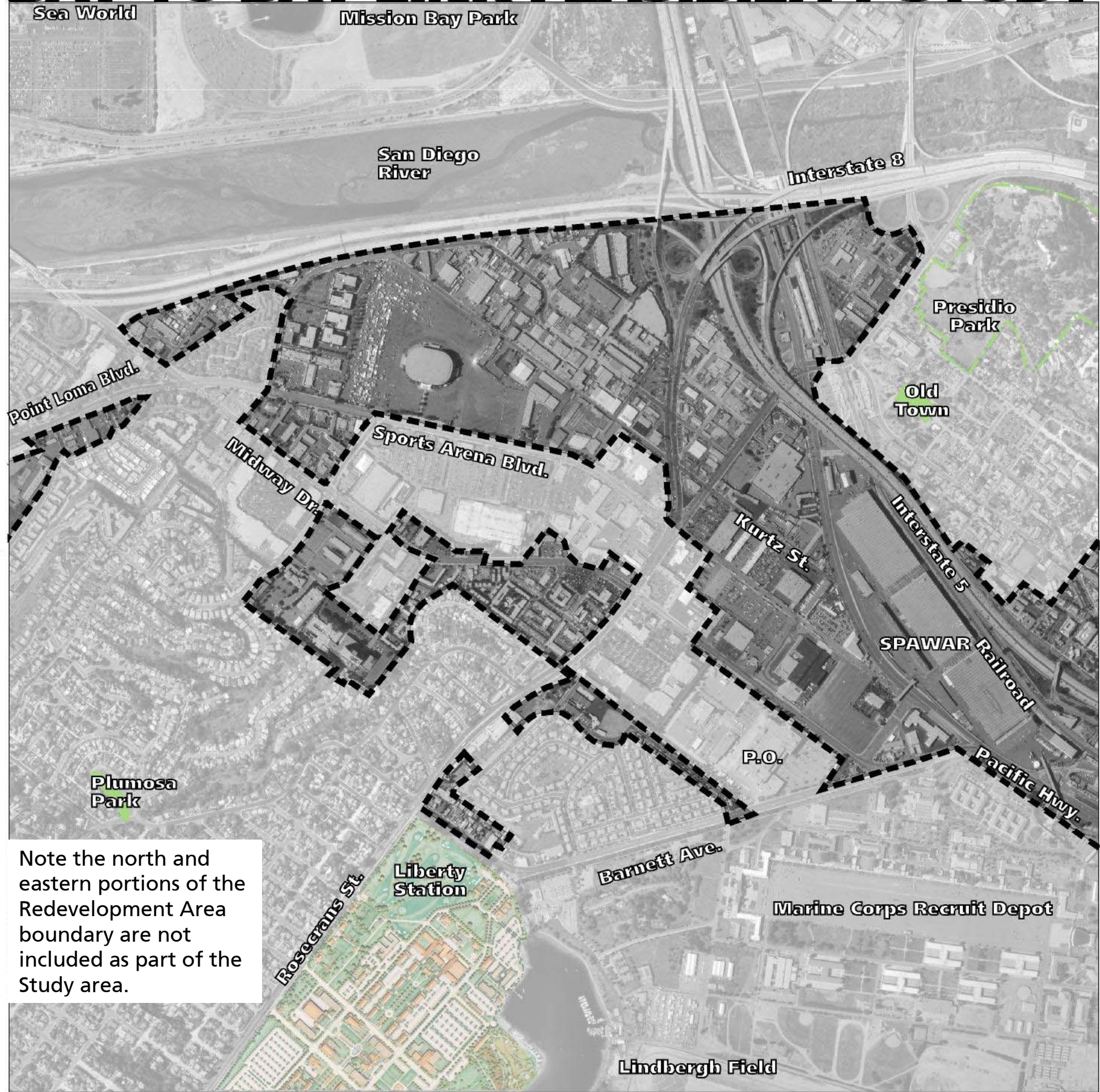


## **B. Basis for the Alternatives**





# BAY TO BAY LINK FEASIBILITY STUDY



## Study Area

The Bay to Bay Link Feasibility Study Area is located between Mission Bay, San Diego Bay, Interstate 5 and the Naval Training Center (Liberty Station). It is associated with the City of San Diego's North Bay Redevelopment Area.

 Redevelopment Area Boundary

The Redevelopment Area "enjoys close proximity to the San Diego harbor, and is focused on the opportunity to coordinate redevelopment plans with the neighboring Naval Training Center Redevelopment Project Area."

"The area is home to major high-tech employers including the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center and Science Applications International Corp. and is also accessible to San Diego Bay and Mission Bay. Existing community and neighborhood shopping centers complement any mixed-use project. The Redevelopment Agency is working closely with the Metropolitan Transit Development Board on the North Bay & Beach Area Transit Study to help improve traffic circulation and transit in the North Bay area."

The following outlines the incentives provided within the Redevelopment Area by the City's Redevelopment Agency.

- Site Assembly
- Fee Reductions
- Permitting Assistance
- Off-site Improvements
- Housing Programs
- Facade Rebates
- Special Public/Private Financing Opportunities
- Minimized/Streamlined Environmental Review and Processing

Source: <http://www.sandiego.gov/redevelopment-agency/northbay.shtml>